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ABSTRACT

A basic introduction is presented to the concept of "values," to their use in daily life, and the forms of statements communicating values effectively. Values are defined as characteristics, properties, or qualities regarded as particularly important for an individual or a group. Their usefulness is found in their serving as a basis for decisions, actions, or judgments. Usually presented in positive terms, effective value statements contain sets of words that (1) specify the important characteristic; (2) label the characteristic as a value; and (3) identify one referent for that value. (MJB)

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A CONCEPT OF VALUE FOR THE CLASSROOM

by

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A CONCEPT OF VALUE FOR THE CLASSROOM

A fundamental purpose of education is to foster thoughtful, rational, and responsible decision making. One basis for such decision making is an individual's values. However, without a concept of value it's difficult for someone to know what their values are, no less use them as a base for judgments and actions. Any educational program that focuses on decision making and values must, therefore, be rooted in a concept of value that works for both students and teachers.

VALUE DEFINED

V *a characteristic,*

A *property or quality*

L *regarded as particularly*

U *important for an*

E *individual or group*

Values range in significance from those that serve as a moral or ethical guide people use to give direction and meaning to their lives such as . . .

FREEDOM	HONOR
HONESTY	RESPECTFUL
SELF-RESPECT	RELIABLE
WISDOM	DISCIPLINED
RESPONSIBILITY	LOGICAL
EQUALITY	OBEDIENT
TRUSTWORTHY	THOUGHTFUL

. . . .to those who serve as a base for decision making about routine, run-of-the-mill matters of living.

functional, effective, efficient, capable, economical, friendly, imaginative, independent, complete, disposable, non-polluting, utilitarian, reusable, practical, unique, free, attractive, priceless, sturdy, and so on.

Values connote that which has worth. Since values are important qualities, characteristics, attributes, or properties considered to reflect intrinsic or enduring excellence by an individual or group, it's obvious that . . .

V	*are*
A	*usually*
L	*stated*
U	*in*
E	*positive*
S	*terms*

USING VALUES

V	*serve as*
A	*a base for*
L	*decisions,*
U	*actions*
E	*or*
S	*judgments*

Consider the statement, "Of the three health plans available to me, I like the Red Circle Health Plan best because you are free to choose your own physician." The value utilized in making this judgment is, "freedom to choose your own physician." The judgment that the Red Circle Health Plan is "best" is based on this value. Obviously, a rational decision is also based on data. Data in this case is information available about whether or not the Red Circle Health Plan does indeed allow subscribers to select their own physician.

While the foregoing definition and examples of values may suggest that there is a one-to-one relationship between an individual's values and his judgments, actions, and decisions, life is usually more complex than that. Any judgment, action, or decision is usually the result of an interplay among several values and data as well. Frequently, such values may even be in conflict.

Other values which may influence in individual's judgment about the Red Circle Health Plan might include:

VALUES	DATA
Expediency	just a signature on the line and you're a member;
Promptness	they are quick to reimburse the member whenever personal funds may have been expended for a physician or for medication;
Simplicity	a claim form is used that requires only the member's signature, the dates of expenditure, and the physician's signature;
Economy	however, the Red Circle Health Plan costs more than all of the other health plans available.

Whether any or all of the above values influence people's judgment about a particular health plan depends upon what they know about the health plans, what they're looking for in a health plan, and the data they are able to generate about them. Knowledge of their values suggests what data is necessary in order for individuals to determine the degree to which their values are

represented in a particular choice. Data serves as the way individuals determine if their values are reflected in the various alternatives being considered. In short, values tell people what to look for, data tells them if it's there.

DISCUSSING VALUES

Following are two comments about health plans:

> *In my view, the Red Circle Health Plan is the best one for me.*
>
> *Some of may values about health plans are that they are economical, comprehensive, and give you the freedom to choose your own physician.*

Both of the above comments are responses to a question. The first is a response to the question, "Which health plan do you like? It's a value judgment. The second comment is a response to the question, "What are your values about health plans?" It's a value statement.

To communicate what your values are, it's necessry to say so. That is, it's necessary to let people know you are discussing values. "Some of my values . . . " it's necessary to let them know what your values are about, ". . . about health plans . . ." and, it's necessary to let them

know what your values are ". . . economical, comprehensive, freedom to choose your own physician." Thus, a statement which communicates values effectively has three components.

V	*a set of*
A	*words which,*
L	*(1) specify*
U	*the important*
E	*characteristic*
S	*(2) label the*
T	*important characteristic*
A	*as a value, and*
T	*(3) identify*
E	*one*
M	*referent*
E	*for*
N	*that*
T	*value*

While value statements usually include these three elements, they may occur in any sequence.

> *Some of my values about health plans are that they are economical, comprehensive, and give you the freedom to choose your own physician.*
>
> *Promptness of service is one of my values about a health plan.*
>
> *When considering which health plan to join, one of my values is convenience; that is, it is close to my home and easy to get in to see the physician.*

It's important to note that even though many of the things people do and say are based on their values, it is only through a value statement that people communicate their values or the values of others clearly and directly. Since value judgments communicate only how people may feel about someone, something, or some place, the values which underlie these judgments are left to speculation. It's not unusual to find several people who agree with a given value judgment, action, or decision, but who do so based on values which differ significantly from each other. And there are those who may not know what their values are, no less be able to communicate them effectively to other.